Test Security Procedures for Nevada Proficiency Examinations

2004-2005



Nevada Department of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) address a number of issues related to consistency in test administration and test security of the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program (NPEP). The statutes also provide "whistle-blower" protection to school employees who report incidents of test irregularity and provide penalties for school personnel who fail to adhere to district or state test security plans. To ensure consistency in test administration and the integrity of the entire testing program, proper test security procedures as outlined in this document must be followed. Unless otherwise stated, test security guidelines outlined in this document apply to all statemandated test administrations, including actual as well as field and pilot tests.

This manual must be used in coordination with *Guidelines for the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program 2004-2005* and *Document of Appendices 2004-2005*. A list of terms and definitions used in this manual can be found in Appendix A of the *Document of Appendices*.

All questions and reports of test irregularities must be directed to the Nevada Department of Education's Office of Assessment, Program Accountability, and Curriculum. Submission of the Report of Test Irregularity should be made to the Administrative Assistant for Test Security:

Name: Carol Mason

Address: 700 East Fifth Street

Carson City, NV 89701-5096

Phone: 775-687-9188 Fax: 775-687-9118

E-mail: cmason@doe.nv.gov

General questions and concerns regarding test irregularities should be directed to either of the following:

Name: Kim Knudson Name: Carol Mason

Test Security Coordinator Address: 700 East Fifth Street

Address: 700 East Fifth Street Carson City, NV 89701-6096

Carson City, NV 89701-5096 Phone: 775-687-9188 775-687-9184 Fax: 775-687-9118

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DISTRICT TEST SECURITY PLANS

- The board of trustees of each school district shall adopt and enforce a plan setting forth procedures to ensure the security of all state and district-mandated tests. This plan must encompass all public schools in the district, including, without limitation, all charter schools.
- By September 1 of each year, the plans must be submitted to:
 - The Nevada Department of Education;
 - The State Board of Education; and
 - The Legislative Committee on Education.
- The Nevada Department of Education is willing to submit the district plans to the State Board of Education and the Legislative Committee on Education on behalf of the school districts. In order to do so, an e-mail attachment or five (5) copies of the District Test Security Plans must be sent to the Test Security Coordinator at the Nevada Department of Education at least one week prior to the September 1 deadline.
- The district plan must be consistent with the procedures outlined in this document and must include:
 - Procedures by which students and other individuals may, and are encouraged to, report irregularities in test administration and test security.
 - The manner in which the school officials will contact the school district board of trustees with regard to reports of test irregularities and how the board will, in turn, notify the Department. This process may include having the board designate the district test director or other district official to act as its designee for reporting purposes.
 - Procedures necessary to ensure security of test materials and consistency of test administration.
 - Procedures that each secondary school will use to verify the identity and eligibility of pupils taking an examination.
 - Procedures that set forth actions that must be taken in response to a report of an irregularity in test administration or testing security, including actions that must be taken during an investigation of the irregularity. For each action that is required, the procedures must identify, by category, who is responsible for taking the action.
 - Manner in which the district test director will store and/or account for the *ITBS/ITED* test booklets.
- On or before September 30 of each year, the board of trustees of each school district and the governing body of each charter school shall provide a written notice regarding the examinations to:

- All teachers and educational personnel employed by the school district or governing body;
- All employed personnel who are involved in test administration;
- Pupils who are required to take the exams; and
- The parents or legal guardians of these pupils.
- The written notice must be prepared in a format that is easily understood and must include a description of:
 - The district test security plan and
 - Action that may be taken against personnel and pupils for violations of the plan or for other testing irregularities.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- In accordance with NRS 389.644, the Nevada Department of Education has established a program of education and training regarding the administration and security of statemandated examinations. Upon approval by the Department, the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a charter school may establish an expanded program of education and training if the expanded program complies with the program established by the Department.
- The board of trustees of each school district and the governing body of each charter school shall ensure that the state-established program of education and training be provided annually to:
 - All teachers and other educational personnel who provide instruction to pupils enrolled in a grade level that is required to participate in state examinations.
 - Other personnel who are involved with the administration of state examinations, including individuals who will be expected to administer or proctor an examination in the event that the assigned test administrator and/or proctor becomes unavailable during the day(s) of testing.
 - All other school personnel as the district or school deems necessary.
 - Student teachers, substitute teachers, and parent and community volunteers who may assist with proctoring an examination.

In accordance with NRS 389.644, the training and education is otherwise available for all personnel who are not required to receive the training and education as outlined above.

- Primary responsibility for test administration **must not** be given to unlicensed personnel, substitute teachers, student teachers, or parent and community volunteers.
- Only individuals who have participated in the annual training must be allowed to administer
 or proctor an examination unless a special training has been provided for them prior to
 administration of the test.
- This training must be designed to cover the following:
 - Procedures regarding allowable activities in the preparation of students taking the *ITBS* and *ITED*.
 - Instructions in proper handling of test materials.
 - Instructions in proper test administration.
 - Security procedures as outlined in this document.
 - Additional security procedures as outlined in the district test security plan.

- Information regarding protection of school district personnel with regard to the disclosure of testing irregularities. (See "Whistleblower Protection" in Appendix M of the *Document of Appendices*.)
- Conditions related to testing, as stated in NRS 391.312 (Refer to Appendix N of the *Document of Appendices*) under which a teacher may be suspended, dismissed, or not reemployed.
- Conditions related to testing, as stated in NRS 391.312 (Refer to Appendix N of the *Document of Appendices*), under which an administrator may be demoted, suspended, dismissed or not reemployed.
- Conditions related to testing, as stated in NRS 391.330 (Refer to Appendix N of the *Document of Appendices*), under which the state board may suspend or revoke the license of any teacher, administrator or other licensed employee.
- Each individual who is involved with the administration of NPEP examinations will acknowledge in writing that he/she has participated in the annual and/or refresher training and:
 - Has read and understands all information provided by the school district related to proper test security and test administration.
 - Understands the potential consequences for failure to observe and carry out the requirements of the state and district test security plans.
 - Understands the potential consequences for failure to comply with the state and district test security plans.
- Each school principal and/or test coordinator will provide a refresher training prior to each state-mandated test administration focusing on specific requirements of the test being administered as well as an overview of test security guidelines.

DISCLOSURE OF TEST CONTENT AND APPROVED ANSWERS

- In accordance with NRS 389.015, the questions contained in state-mandated examinations and the approved answers are confidential, and disclosure is unlawful except:
 - To the extent necessary for administering and evaluating the examinations. **Knowledge** or review of actual test content is not necessary for valid test administration and is strictly prohibited.
 - When it is necessary for the performance of the duties of a:
 - 1) State officer who is a member of the executive or legislative branch.
 - 2) Superintendent of schools of a school district.
 - 3) Director of curriculum of a school district.
 - 4) Director of testing of a school district.
 - 5) (Department staff and/or the Attorney General's Office are charged with determining whether gaining access to state-mandated examinations is necessary and permitted by law.)
 - That specific questions and answers may be disclosed if the Superintendent of Public Instruction determines that the content of the questions and answers are not being used in a current examination and making the content available to the public poses no threat to the security of the current examination process. (*Nevada High School Proficiency Examinations in Reading and Mathematics* developed before 1990 have been released by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.)
- Test administrators, proctors, school administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, and any other school personnel are not allowed to review the test contents for any reason unless they are covered by one of the exceptions listed above.
- A test administrator or proctor who is requested to read aloud the contents of a state-mandated test in compliance with student IEP requirements must sign a form indicating that he/she will not disclose the test contents to any other person. (See Confidentiality Form, Appendix I, in the *Document of Appendices*.)
- Test booklets or writing tests must not be copied or reproduced by any means without the prior written authorization of the test publisher and the Nevada Department of Education, nor is any individual allowed to make notes on test content.
- Under no circumstances shall copies of test booklets, writing prompts, or student responses be circulated among faculty, administrators, or other persons.
- Writing prompts used in the 4th and 8th grade assessments and the HSPE may be retained at the school site and used for diagnostic purposes after the scoring results have been received. These documents are secure and must remain in locked storage cabinets while located at the district or school site.
- Administration of a state-mandated examination to a person who is not eligible to take that examination is an unauthorized disclosure of test content.

STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION OF TEST MATERIALS

- Test booklets, writing prompts, and student responses must be stored in locked storage cabinets while located at the district or school site. At no time may examination materials be left unattended in any area where students and others have unsupervised access. This includes loading docks and mailrooms.
- The locked room or file cabinet used for the storage of secure materials required for the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program must not be accessible to anyone other than the principal or school test coordinator, nor can it be used for the storage of other materials to which individuals other than the principal or test coordinator require access.
- District test directors must follow the directions from the Nevada Department of Education and the testing company regarding the receipt of materials and the reporting of discrepancies.
- Testing materials are not to be distributed to test administrators until the prescribed date for test administration.
- The district test director must maintain a log identifying the serial numbers of the test booklets assigned to each school.
- The district test director must account for all test booklets and other testing materials immediately upon their return from each school's test coordinator.
- The school test coordinator must maintain a log identifying the serial numbers of the test booklets assigned to each test administrator.
- The school test coordinator must account for all test booklets and other testing materials immediately upon their return from each test administrator.
- The classroom test administrator must maintain a log identifying the serial number of the test booklet assigned to each student in the classroom.
- Classroom test administrators must account for all test booklets, writing prompts, student responses, and other testing materials, including scratch paper, before students are allowed to leave the testing room for any reason.
- The classroom test administrator must place test booklets in serial number order before returning to the school test coordinator.
- On completion of testing, test administrators must return testing materials to the test coordinator in a timely manner and not later than the end of the school day on which the test(s) is/are administered. If testing will take place over a period of more than one day, all testing materials must be returned to the school test coordinator at the end of each school day and picked up again in the morning of the next testing day, unless otherwise specified in the administration manual.

• District test directors must return answer documents and testing booklets to the specified vendor for each test (the state's testing company for HSPE and CRTs in Reading, Mathematics, and Science and to the Nevada Department of Education for the Writing Proficiency Examinations) no later than Friday of the week following the close of the test administration window. Therefore, it is imperative that schools strictly adhere to the district's timelines for the return of materials.

ADMINISTRATION OF EXAMINATIONS

- Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 389.051 prescribes when the NPEP examinations are to be given. The Nevada Department of Education prescribes the specific date or range of dates on or during which an examination or examinations will be given. Examinations given at times other than those prescribed must be approved with the Department Consultant who manages the particular examination program¹ before proceeding to administer an examination on another date.
- Examinations must be administered by licensed employees of a district or charter school who are trained in proper test administration procedures and administered in a public facility approved by the board of trustees or the governing body. Unlicensed personnel, substitute teachers, student teachers, and parent or community volunteers may act as proctors and not as test administrators.
- Test administrators must read and follow the script provided in the administration manuals for administering each test.
- Students who are not participating in a specific test must not be allowed in the testing room while tests are being administered.
- At least one test administrator and a sufficient number of proctors must be provided in each testing room to adequately supervise the testing. A ratio of one proctor to not more than 30 students is strongly recommended.
- Classroom test administrators and proctors must circulate through the room, ensuring that students are on task and marking in the correct section of the test.
- Districts or schools should arrange for reading, writing, mathematics, and science tests to be administered by school officials who do not teach the subject tested.
- The identity and eligibility of all students who participate in NPEP testing at the secondary level must be verified in accordance with the district test security plan.
- Test administrators, proctors, or other adults may not provide assistance of any kind beyond making certain that students understand the instructions for taking the test.
- Students may not provide assistance of any kind on testing material to other students.
- During writing assessments, test administrators or proctors must not assist students in any way or review the students' rough drafts during or between writing sessions.
- A restroom break should be provided prior to the test administration. Restroom breaks should be discouraged during the administration of tests in grades 3 through 8. On any

¹ Please refer to page 1 of this manual for a complete listing of the appropriate assessment personnel.

administration of the High School Proficiency Examination, having students leave the room for any reason except in an emergency should not be allowed.

- At no time shall students be left unattended with testing materials.
- All required materials, e.g., #2 pencils, test booklets, answer sheets, and scratch paper must be provided at the testing location. However, on the Math Calculation test of the *ITBS* and *ITED*, students may bring and use their own calculators. These calculators shall be collected after completing the Math Calculation test and returned to students after the testing session.
- No calculators are to be used on the CRTs unless specified in a student's IEP.
- All testing materials, including test booklets, writing prompts, student responses, and scratch
 paper, must be returned to the test administrator and accounted for before a student is
 allowed to leave the testing area for any reason. Extra care must be taken to monitor the
 students' use of scratch paper to avoid cheating.
- Additional instructional materials, beyond those specified in test administration instructions, or approved by an IEP committee, cannot be provided to students for use during a test administration.
- Failure to strictly adhere to consistent and uniform test administration procedures may result in the invalidation of student scores. A student whose test has been invalidated will count as a non-participant on the assessment for purposes of AYP, and the student will be placed in the lowest achievement level. (Refer to "School Accountability and AYP" section, page 10 of the Guidelines for the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program, 2004-2005.)

REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING TESTING IRREGULARITIES

- In accordance with NRS 389.628, a school official who has reason to believe that a violation of the state or district test security plan has occurred must immediately report the incident to the district board of trustees. The district test security plan may require all reports of test security violations to be first directed to the school principal for reporting to the district board of trustees.
- If the board of trustees has reason to believe that a violation of the district or state test security plan has occurred, for a state-mandated test, NRS 389.628 requires that the board of trustees must:
 - Immediately report the incident to the Administrative Assistant for Test Security at the Department either orally or in writing.
 - Ensure that a Report of Test Irregularity is submitted to the Department within 14 school days after the incident occurred. A copy of this form can be found in Appendix O of the *Document of Appendices*.
 - Begin an investigation of the incident in accordance with NRS 389.628.
- In order to expedite the reporting process, the board of trustees may designate the district test director or other school district official to receive reports of test security violations on behalf of the board. The manner in which school officials will contact the school district board of trustees with regard to reports of test irregularities and how the board will, in turn, notify the Department must be clearly stipulated in the District Test Security Plan.
- Upon receipt of a Report of Test Irregularity, the Administrative Assistant for Test Security
 will review the report, issue a case number, and assign the case to an assessment consultant.
 The Administrative Assistant for Test Security will mail the District Test Director a Notice of
 Receipt that will contain the case number and name of the assessment consultant to whom
 the case has been assigned.
- The majority of the communication regarding the Report of Test Irregularity will occur between the District Test Director and the assessment consultant assigned to the case.
- A team of reviewers consisting of two or three Department assessment consultants, including the Test Security Coordinator, will:
 - Conduct a thorough review of the information contained in the Report of Test Irregularity.
 - If necessary, request additional information to assist in the review process from the school principal, district test director, or other school official involved in the reported test irregularity.
 - Determine whether evidence exists to indicate that actions which resulted in the testing irregularity were conducted intentionally.

- Determine whether evidence exists to indicate that consequences associated with the testing irregularity have resulted in, or could result in, significant damage to the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program.
- Determine whether sufficient evidence exists to warrant an invalidation of student scores.
- If the Department's team of reviewers determines that an irregularity in test administration or security has occurred, but there is no evidence that the irregularity was intentional, and there is no evidence that the consequences associated with the irregularity could result in significant damage to the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program, the assessment consultant assigned to the case shall notify the board of trustees or its designee in writing indicating the results of its findings. These results may include, but are not limited to:
 - A requirement for the school or district to conduct an additional administration of the examination.
 - A requirement for the school or district to complete a corrective action plan.
 - The Department's recommendations and/or requirements for inclusion in the school or district corrective action plan.
- If the Department's team of reviewers determines that there is sufficient evidence that an intentional irregularity in testing administration or security has occurred, or there is evidence that the consequences associated with the irregularity (regardless of intent) resulted in or may result in significant damage to the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program, the assessment consultant assigned to the case shall notify the board of trustees or its designee in writing indicating the results of its findings. These results may include, but are not limited to:
 - A requirement for the school or district to conduct an additional administration of the examination.
 - A requirement for the school or district to complete a corrective action plan.
 - The Department's recommendations and/or requirements for inclusion in the school or district corrective action plan.
 - A requirement for the district to begin an investigation in order to obtain further information regarding the testing irregularity. The Department may also choose to conduct an investigation separately or in conjunction with the school district.
 - Information that the report is being submitted to the Deputy Attorney General's office for further review.
 - A requirement for the invalidation of student test scores.
- When an irregularity in test administration or an irregularity in test security results in the invalidation of student test scores, those test scores will not be included in the scores of students reported for the school for purposes of determining Adequate Yearly Progress. Those students will also not be included in the school's count of students who participated in the assessment. In addition, instances of cheating on state-mandated assessments require that a student's scores be invalidated. The students will be placed in the lowest achievement level,

and they will not be included in the school's count of students who participated in the assessment.

- If the Department's team of reviewers determines that at least one testing irregularity occurred at a school during one school year on any state-required examination, excluding the High School Proficiency Examination, and in the immediately succeeding school year, at least one additional irregularity of the same kind occurs, the review team shall determine whether the irregularity warrants an additional administration of the examination.
 - If the review team determines that an additional administration of the examination is required, the Department shall notify the school and the school district of this determination. The additional administration may include an entire grade or just specific pupils as determined by the Department.
 - The review team must consider the effect of each testing irregularity regarding whether the scores of pupils will be invalidated and whether sufficient time remains in the school year when determining the need for an additional administration of an examination.
 - The additional administration must occur in the same school year in which the irregularity occurred. The school district shall pay for all costs related to the additional administration. Additional test administrations required of charter schools will be paid directly by the charter school itself.
 - Unless determined otherwise, the district test director will coordinate the additional test administration, with the assistance of school district administrators as he/she deems necessary.
- A school principal will be required to file a corrective action plan with the Department under conditions which include, but are not limited to:
 - When an investigation reveals that the test irregularity resulted from inappropriate school-level test administration and/or an inadequate security protocol, including lack of appropriate storage and distribution of testing materials.
 - When an investigation reveals that the school principal did not provide for adequate or sufficient training of school personnel in test administration and/or security procedures.
- A district test director will be required to file a corrective action plan with the Department under conditions which include, but are not limited to:
 - When an investigation reveals that the test irregularity resulted from inappropriate district test administration and/or an inadequate security protocol, including lack of appropriate storage and distribution of testing materials.
 - When an investigation reveals that the district test director did not provide for adequate or sufficient training of school district personnel in test administration and/or security procedures.
- The Department Test Security Coordinator will forward a report of test irregularity to the Deputy Attorney General if an investigation reveals that a licensed employee of the school district or charter school:

- Was responsible for a breach in the security or confidentiality of the test's questions or answers; or
- Intentionally failed to observe and carry out the requirements of the district and state test security plans.
- If the report is forwarded to the Deputy Attorney General, the Nevada Department of Education shall monitor the investigation or review to ensure timely completion and consultation. The Department's Test Security Coordinator will conduct investigations and/or an investigator will be assigned to the case by the Attorney General's Office. Following this investigation, the Deputy Attorney General and the Deputy Superintendent of Instructional, Research, and Evaluative Services; the Director of the Office of Assessments, Program Accountability, and Curriculum; or the Department Test Security Coordinator will confer about the case.
 - If it is determined that the evidence is insufficient to issue a charging document against an individual(s) for (a) a breach in the security or confidentiality of a test's questions or answers, or (b) intentional failure to observe and carry out the state or district test security plan, the Department's Test Security Coordinator will write a letter reporting this finding to the district superintendent and testing director. No disciplinary action will be taken by the Department, but this does not preclude a school district from taking disciplinary action.
 - If the evidence is sufficient to support a charging document against an individual(s) for (a) a breach in the security or confidentiality of a test's questions or answers, or (b) intentional failure to observe and carry out the state or district test security plan and the Superintendent of Public Instruction decides to take action for the suspension or revocation of the individual's license, a notice of complaint will be issued to the licensee.
 - When there is sufficient evidence to take action against an individual's license, both the significance of the test irregularity and the intent of the individual's actions are factors considered in evaluating the appropriateness of suspension or revocation of license.

ASSURANCES FROM PRINCIPALS

- In accordance with Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 389.054, on or before September 15 of each year the principal of each public and charter school shall submit to the Department of Education a statement that the principal will ensure that the school will comply with the regulations and statutes related to the confidentiality of testing materials, proper administration of the state-mandated tests, and provision for annual test security training as well as refresher trainings prior to each specific test administration.
- The Nevada Department of Education has prepared a three-part form entitled "Authorization to Administer the Nevada Proficiency Examinations in Accordance With Nevada Revised Statutes and the Nevada Administrative Code". Although every school should receive this form from the district test director, a copy of the form is included in Appendix E of the *Document of Appendices* as a reference.
- Private, exempt, and non-district affiliated schools that wish to participate in the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program must complete and return the two-part form "Authorization for Private/Exempt Schools to Administer Tests in the Nevada Proficiency Examination" prior to receipt of any examination materials. A copy of this form is included in Appendix K of the *Document of Appendices*. For the 2004-2005 school year, private schools who wish to participate in any state assessments within the Nevada Proficiency Exam Program must not only attend the Nevada Department of Education's test administration training in August, but must also be in compliance with all Private School statute and administrative code requirements within NRS and NAC chapter 394. Further information regarding the participation of private, exempt, and other non-district affiliated schools in NPEP can be found in the "Private, Exempt, and Non-District Affiliated Schools" section of the *Guidelines for the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program: 2004-2005*.